

Additional Federal Funding Secured For Big Caney Water System Improvements (April 28, 2005)

CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER SECURES ADDITIONAL FEDERAL FUNDING FOR BIG CANEY WATER SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

\$3,469,000 in Federal Funding Will Be Used for Phases III and IV of Large Project

(Washington, D.C.) - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that, at his urging, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, through its Rural Development Agency, is providing federal funding in the amount of \$3,469,000 to the Dickenson County Public Service Authority (PSA) to launch Phases III and IV of the Big Caney Water Improvement project. Of that total amount, \$2,602,000 is being provided in the form of a federal grant, and \$867,000 is being provided as a low-interest federal loan. "The project is one of the largest water improvement projects in the history of our region. Currently, 1/3 of the households in Dickenson County rely on the Big Caney water system, either directly or indirectly, for drinking water, but the water system is in serious need of repair. The federal funding which I am announcing today will be used to launch the final phases of the comprehensive water improvement project," Boucher said.

Water testing has shown that approximately 40 percent of the water in the Big Caney system is lost due to leaks in the water lines. These leaks have dramatically increased the cost of operating and maintaining the water system and have degraded the quality of water service provided to residents who receive drinking water from the system.

Today's funding announcement provides federal monies for Phase III and IV of the Big Caney Water Improvement project which will be conducted simultaneously. The total cost for the two phases is \$5 million. In addition to the federal grant and federal loan which are being announced today, the Appalachian Regional Commission has agreed to Boucher's request to provide a federal grant in the amount of \$500,000 for the final phases of the Big Caney project. Boucher noted that applications are currently pending with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Safe Drinking Water Act program to complete the funding necessary for Phases III and IV.

Phases III and IV of the Big Caney project are the final phases of the comprehensive water improvement project. Phases III and IV include the construction of six new pump stations throughout the Big Caney service area, including the construction of two pump stations in the Big Ridge and Baker communities. Three new water storage tanks will also be installed. A 150,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the community of Clinchco, a 100,000 gallon tank will be installed in Upper Caney Ridge, and the existing tank at Big Ridge will be replaced with a new 200,000 gallon water storage tank. The existing tank in Caney Ridge will also be replaced with a new water storage tank. As a final element of the project, the water distribution systems for the Big Ridge and Caney Ridge communities will be connected to ensure greater water service to the residents of those communities. In addition, the water lines in Upper Caney Ridge will be replaced with newer lines.

Last week, Congressman Boucher participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the first phase of the project. The first phase will replace 54,700 feet of water lines from White Ridge to Puckett Gap and from Peuther Chapel to Yates Chapel. In addition, a new water pump station will be constructed at Gay Branch, and a 60,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the McClure community to replace a 30,000 gallon tank which is currently in use. Phase I will improve the public water service for the residents in the community of McClure and portions of the Tarpon and Caney Ridge communities. Construction for Phase I is expected to take approximately one year to complete.

Phase II of the project will begin later this year and will continue the replacement of water lines in Phase I by replacing the water lines in the communities of Tarpon, Caney Ridge and Clinchco. Water lines will be replaced from Puckett Gap to the Big Ridge water storage tank and from Yates Chapel to the Caney Ridge water storage tank. In addition, a new 200,000 gallon water storage tank will be installed in the community of Tarpon. Construction for Phase II of the project is expected to be completed by the Fall of 2006.

Congressman Boucher has been instrumental in obtaining previous allocations of federal funding for each of the phases of the Big Caney Water Improvement project. In 2003, he announced federal funding from the Rural Development agency totaling nearly \$2.1 million for the first phase of the project. That allocation of federal funding represented the entire cost of the first phase and is now being used by Dickenson County as construction of Phase I commences. Last year, he secured a federal grant in the amount of \$300,000 for Phase II of the Big Caney project. The EPA's Safe Drinking Water Act program is providing \$1,231,750 in federal funding for Phase II of the project, and a \$500,000 federal Community Development Block Grant has also been awarded for the second phase. Today's announcement of federal funding brings to more than \$8 million the total federal investment in the project to date.

"Today's federal funding announcement marks another major success in our efforts to bring reliable public water service to the residents of Southwest Virginia, and I am pleased that the Rural Development Agency has continued to make a significant commitment to improve water service for the residents of Dickenson County. I am pleased that the Appalachian Regional Commission has honored my request to provide the necessary federal funding to improve water service for the residents of Dickenson County," Boucher concluded.